

Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination



Department Profile

**Constance C. Holland, AICP
Director**

December 10, 2020

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WHO WE ARE:

Our office is the primary point of contact between Delaware's local governments and the State government on planning and land use issues. Because the State is heavily involved in funding infrastructure and services, close coordination between all levels of government is critical. Our office strives to maintain open lines of communications, to assist local governments with land use planning, and to collaborate and coordinate on planning issues. We also serve an important coordinating function between and amongst State agencies, allowing an open dialogue and coordination which focus on allowing the State to "speak with one voice" on a wide range of land use planning, resource conservation, and economic development issues. We are a small office (only 6 people) with a big role. We can only accomplish our mission through the hard work and collaboration of the agencies and local governments that we serve.

The Office of State Planning staff view themselves as public servants. The jobs within the Office of State Planning Coordination require a lot of listening and working through issues regarding all aspects of Land Use Planning and State regulation. Because we work with the public, county and local governments, as well as all other departments of the State, this is not just an 8:00 -4:30 job for most staff members as they are required to work nights and sometimes weekends to ensure that they are there to assist local jurisdictions when needed. Our mission is one of outreach and coordination - Outreach to local jurisdictions to make sure they are in compliance with all State Code requirements and coordination with both the local jurisdictions and the State agencies to make sure the Governor's programs are administered.

WHAT WE DO:

According to Delaware Code, the roles of the Office of State Planning Coordination are to:

- Author of the Strategies for State Policies and Spending document. The Strategies were developed to guide the state of Delaware in making appropriate, cost effective investment decisions which promote efficient development patterns, protect agriculture and open space, and discourage sprawl.
- Assist in statewide planning matters, and it shall function as an advisory, consultative and coordinating office.
 - a. Circuit Rider Planner for each county for technical assistance to county and municipal governments.
 - b. Planners serve on regional committees (including the three regional transportation planning organizations in Delaware, WILMAPCO, the Dover/Kent MPO and the

Salisbury-Wicomico MPO) to ensure Strategies for State Policies and Spending is part of the planning process.

- Provide staffing assistance to the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues
- Collect and coordinate the comments of state agencies regarding land use planning actions through the Preliminary Land Use Service (PLUS) pursuant to Chapter 92 of the Delaware Code. In carrying out this function, the Office of State Planning Coordination shall, to the maximum extent possible.
 - a. Reconcile differing opinions and conclusions among agency comments with the objective of providing consistent, timely and useful information to the local government.
 - b. Speak for the State on land use matters subject to Chapter 92 of this title.
- Render local planning technical assistance to county and municipal governments for the purposes of coordinating planning activities, promoting liaison between various state agencies and local governments, building capacity through training and sharing of digital and other information, developing infrastructure plans, addressing specific growth and design issues, and such other actions as are appropriate to achieve the purposes of this chapter.
- Review and accept Plan of Services for all annexations.
 - a. Ensure that all proposed annexations are in compliance with the most recently certified comprehensive plan
 - b. Be sure annexed parcels are contiguous to the municipal boundaries
 - c. Verify that municipal government and/or public utilities has a plan for providing necessary utilities to the annexed land.
- Review new comprehensive plans, and plan amendments, for county and municipal jurisdictions for certification.
 - a. Determine consistency of plans with Strategies for State Policies and Spending; negotiate inconsistencies
- Develop and promote cooperation and coordination among state agencies and local governments to ensure effective and efficient planning and infrastructure investment.
- Work with OMB Director's office and Department of Education regarding school sites. The State Planning Coordinator, OMB Director, and Secretary of Education must sign off on all new school sites to verify they are consistent with Strategies for State Policies and Spending.
- The OSPC serves as the State Data Center for the United States Census. In this role we are the agency that coordinates between the Census Bureau and the local governments

and state agencies in Delaware. As a part of the recent Census efforts in 2020 the OSPC was involved in the Complete Count Commission, which aimed to ensure that all Delawareans were counted in the Census (more information is below).

- The OSPC serves as a member of the Delaware Population Consortium and provides support to the Consortium by assisting with meetings, websites and other administrative tasks. The DPC prepares a unified set of population projections for the state and all of its political jurisdictions that are used for policy and planning purposes.
- Provide lead staff, direction, and leadership for the Delaware Geographic Data Committee (DGDC):
 - a. Coordination of geospatial data collection efforts statewide
 - b. Coordinate with DTI on the FirstMap geospatial enterprise solution.
 - c. Promote Open Data access to all geospatial data
 - d. Represent Delaware to Federal government agencies in matters relating to Geospatial information.
 - e. Work with other state, county, and local agencies to set common data standards.
 - f. Promote use of geospatial technologies in K12 classrooms throughout Delaware.
- Work with Public Service Commission to verify the Strategy level for proposed water and sewer infrastructure planned by non-municipal utilities such as Tidewater and Artesian.
- Manage the Downtown Development District Program, which includes administering applications for new districts, coordinating with the twelve designated DDD communities, processing boundary and incentive amendment requests through the Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues, and ensuring compliance with the Program Guidelines.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS WE ARE PROUD OF:

When Connie was asked to be the State Planning Coordinator, she met with then Governor Minner and was given a list of goals that were important to the administration. Connie was asked to meet those goals during the Governor's first term of Office. This office stepped up to the plate and accomplished all the goals on the original list, as well as other goals that became important. We are very proud of our relationship of trust and assistance with the local governments and our relationship with State agencies.

Some of these goals were:

HB 255 – HB 255, signed on 7-13-01, requires that all local jurisdictions have a comprehensive plan certified by the State. It also requires that the local jurisdictions bring their zoning into compliance with their comprehensive plan within 18 months of certification of that plan. HB 255 also required local jurisdictions to complete a Plan of Services form for all proposed

annexations. **To date all 60 local jurisdictions have comprehensive plans and many have completed one or more full plan update.** In addition, numerous local jurisdictions have created master plans, which are detailed implementation plans for parts of their jurisdictions. Many of these communities had never prepared a comprehensive plan before, and in many cases our office assisted them through grant funding or direct planning assistance. For the first time in Delaware's history the local governments are all doing land use plans, which provide the State with critical land use information that improves the coordination of infrastructure and services for the benefit of all Delaware residents. Our office has been the catalyst for these efforts during this historic period.

State Strategies – In 1999, the Office of State Planning authored the Strategies for State Policies and Spending. The Strategies were developed to guide the state of Delaware in making appropriate, cost effective investment decisions which promote efficient development patterns; protect agriculture and open space and discourage sprawl. The State Strategies are updated every five years, with updates occurring in 2004, 2009, 2015 and just last year in 2020. All of the updates have been completed in-house by our staff with assistance from the State agencies, local governments and the University of Delaware Institute for Public Administration. This approach has saved the State many thousands of dollars over the years by not hiring consultants to prepare the plan.

Preliminary Land Use Service (PLUS) – This office put through new legislation that revised the 30 year old Land Use Planning Act (LUPA) law. Through this process, developers and local jurisdictions meet with State agencies early in the development process. This process has proved to be very useful in getting the State programs heard by local jurisdictions and developers, and in some cases has prompted change to site plans to make them more environmentally friendly. This process has proved to be a very important step in land use planning. Since its inception in February 2004, the State Planning Office has reviewed 1,620 applications. The Office is currently working with ESRI to modernize the PLUS process and move the application and commenting process online (see more below).

Annexations – Since December 2003, this office has received 583 Plan of Service forms from local jurisdictions regarding annexations. This office has the responsibility of reviewing these forms and working with local governments to gather all required information.

Planning - This office has worked hard to raise the level of awareness about land use planning among local elected and appointed officials and the general public. Through our partnership with the University of Delaware, we have co-sponsored many training sessions for local government officials.

In the years since Governor Minner's administration the OSPC has continued to provide leadership and actions to help Delaware plan for its future. Here are some more recent initiatives that highlight our commitment to service, and our role in coordination:

2020 Census – 2020 saw the 10-year census take place. In order to facilitate an accurate enumeration Governor Carney created the Complete Count Commission. OSPC partnered with DTI and the Lieutenant Governor's office for this effort to support the 2020 Census and getting a

complete count of Delaware population. OSPC was primary staff and coordinated a \$650,000 budget and several specialized subcommittees. The OSPC's efforts received an International Award, the 2020 Special Achievement in GIS from Esri for the Delaware Census Complete Count Commission HUB site design, mapping, dashboards.

FirstMap – OSPC coordinated the effort leading to creation of this enterprise system to serve statewide geospatial data. OSPC continues to coordinate state agencies to further advance this system.

Healthy Communities - In order to improve Delawareans' health outcomes and their quality of life, it is important to start addressing the quality of the environment in which we live. To start, state agencies, local governments, and communities can change the design of communities and transportation systems, promote access to healthy foods, increase opportunities for exercise, and collect data to track outcomes. A healthy community design incorporates a mixture of land uses, transportation options, parks, medical services, and recreational opportunities. The OSPC has collaborated with many state agencies and other partners on ways to make Delaware a healthy place to live, work, and play.

Downtown Development Districts – The DDD program was created in 2014 to encourage and enable economic development and revitalization of Delaware's downtowns. There are a variety of State and local incentives, the most significant of which is the State DDD Rebate which reimburses property owners/developers for up to 20% of their qualified real property investment in projects in the District. Currently there are twelve designated DDDs in the program. Since early 2015 the total pool of active and completed projects represent \$35.8 million in State funds leveraging \$629 million in private investment. The OSPC helped research and develop the legislation and the program, and continues to actively implement the program by enforcing the program guidelines, leading the DDD Resource Team, and providing support and training to the Districts.

Opportunity Zones - In April 2018, Governor Carney announced twenty-five communities and economically distressed Census Tracts across Delaware that were designated as Opportunity Zones by the U.S. Department of the Treasury. Opportunity Zones are a Federal program. Qualified investors in the zones may become eligible for federal tax incentives. The OSPC assisted in the Governor's effort by conducting mapping and data analysis that enabled him to select the most impactful Census tracts throughout the state. These Opportunity Zone designations will help build on ongoing community development efforts across Delaware and encourage additional private investment in economically distressed communities where such investment could have the most impact. The Delaware sites include a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial properties that are well-positioned to compete for the significant investment needed in low-income communities across the state. Most of the designated Downtown Development Districts coincide with Opportunity Zone Census Tracts for at least a portion of the district boundary.

MAJOR PROJECTS WE ARE WORKING ON:

Comprehensive Planning: Kent and Sussex Counties recently completed the update of their comprehensive plans and New Castle County will be beginning their update soon. This office continues to work with local jurisdictions as they update and amend their comprehensive plans. With sixty local jurisdictions this is an ongoing effort. Similarly, we are working with counties and municipalities on Master Planning areas. Master Plans currently underway include the Little Heaven and South Frederica Master Plans in Kent County, and the Southern New Castle County Master Plan in New Castle County.

PLUS Modernization – The PLUS process has not changed much since its inception. However, the OSPC has begun to modernize the application and review process. This modernization will provide an online application-form submittal with geo-referencing submitted site plans. Each reviewing agency will be able to utilize an online mapping application to provide better site-specific comments. This will enable the ability to view site specific concerns on a map during the monthly meeting, something that is not possible with the current system. Another feature of the new system is that it will allow developers and applicants to complete a pre-check evaluation of the site to inform their site design process, which they can take advantage of before they submit to PLUS.

Geospatial Data Survey – OSPC is coordinating a survey to determine the use of the primary geospatial data sets: Aerial Imagery, LiDAR, Land Use/Land Cover and Impervious Surface. This survey will determine the specifications, the use and the potential funding sources to obtain these data at the statewide level. It will create a more efficient use of state resources.

Geospatial Coordination – This effort was identified through Governor Carney’s GEAR initiative to look at better ways to manage and coordinate all the agencies using geospatial technologies more efficiently. OSPC is working with DelDOT on a contract with UD’s IPA which has interviewed each state agency and performed research on other states to provide recommendations on how to improve the Delaware’s geospatial coordination efforts.

State Land Inventory - This effort was identified through Governor Carney’s GEAR initiative. OSPC has created and has been verifying a list of all lands owned and managed by the State of Delaware. This list is static and only reflects a point in time. The goal of this effort is to create a central statewide database in which all agencies would input their state land data. This will provide a more efficient and comprehensive view of the State Lands – whether owned or managed.

RASCL - The Resilient and Sustainable Communities League (RASCL) is a collaborative network made up of partners working to promote resilience and sustainability in communities across the State of Delaware. RASCL provides information, technical assistance, and networking opportunities to state, local, and county governments, citizen groups, the private sector, and non-profit organizations in order to advance the goals of resilience and sustainability in the State of Delaware. The OSPC is a founding member agency of this partnership and remains continually engaged in their efforts through training and coordination with local government planning activities.

Downtown Development District Resource Team – the Downtown Development Districts Resources Team develops strategies, materials, and programming to assist the DDD communities. This group includes staff from the Office of State Planning Coordination as well as the Division of Small Business and the Delaware State Housing Authority. A consultant with expertise in downtown redevelopment assists the DDD Resource Team.

PERSONNEL:

Connie Holland, AICP - Director

Connie Holland currently serves as Director of the Office of State Planning Coordination under the leadership of Governor John Carney. In this capacity she directs the Office of State Planning Coordination, which acts as a liaison between State and local governments. Connie was the former director of the Kent County Planning Office responsible for planning, inspections and GIS.

Connie was nationally recognized in July 2000 with the distinguished title of AICP (American Institute of Certified Planners). She is a member of the National and Delaware Chapters of the American Planning Association (APA) and the Delaware Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration (DAPA).

In 2010 Connie was honored by the Delaware APA with the Peter Larson Memorial Achievement Award. This prestige award was given in recognition of "a portfolio of work which has advanced the profession of planning in the state of Delaware." In 2016 Connie was the Delaware Association for Public Administration Public Service Award recipient.

Tricia Arndt, AICP – Principal Planner

Tricia Arndt joined the Office of State Planning Coordination in 2018 as the Circuit Rider Planner for New Castle County. Prior to coming on board, Tricia spent over 15 years in various positions within the Delaware Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Control, primarily in the Coastal Management Program where she effectively executed a regulatory program with oversight of federal agency development activities. She has been involved in analyzing and planning for impacts from sea level rise and climate change statewide, developing offshore energy policy, coordinating with other Mid-Atlantic States on coastal and estuarine issues, and numerous planning efforts for the State of Delaware.

Tricia is an AICP-certified planner, a University of Delaware alumni, a current Wilmington University graduate student in Public Administration, and a proud Delaware native.

Stephen Bayer – Planner V

Steve Bayer is a Planner with the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination. His primary duties include coordination of the Preliminary Land Use Service, all Census activities and supporting the County Circuit Rider Planners. Steve has a Bachelor of Arts in environmental studies from The Pennsylvania State University, a Master of Science in environmental science from Wesley College, and a Juris Doctor from Michigan State University.

David Edgell, AICP – Principal Planner

David Edgell is a Principal Planner with the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination. He has 25 years of experience as a planner, 18 of which are in his current position. David's

responsibilities include coordinating State land use priorities and resources with county, municipal and development interests, statewide land use planning, school siting, capital and facilities planning, demographics, and integrating land use planning into the State budget process. Prior to his current position David worked at the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration assisting small towns with planning, zoning and governance issues. He began his career working for the City of Dover where he helped draft Dover's comprehensive plan and managed the City's development review process.

Dorothy Morris, AICP – Principal Planner

Dorothy is a Delaware native. She grew up in North Dover and Smyrna and graduated from Smyrna High School. Dorothy has worked for the State of Delaware for 27 years working in the Delaware Alcoholic Beverage Commission and the Child Mental Health unit of the Division of Youth and Family Services before beginning with the State Planning Office in 1997.

Shortly after being hired by the OSPC, she was assigned to administer the Land Use Planning Act review for land use planning actions and began to take on more planning related responsibilities. When HB255 passed and the Preliminary Land Use Service was created, Dorothy was chosen to administer the program. She was promoted to Planner I in 2004 and Planner II in 2010. Dorothy accepted the job as Principal Planner in June 2013 taking over the responsibility as the Circuit Rider Planner for Sussex County municipalities.

Miriam Pomilio – Principal Planner

Miriam Pomilio is a Principal Planner with the Office of State Planning Coordination. She has over 25 years of experience in geospatial technologies. She has worked for both the State and the University of Delaware during her career. Her primary duty is to provide geospatial support for all programs at OSPC. Miriam also works with other state and local agencies to assist with planning related programs. She was instrumental in the development of the FirstMap enterprise GIS solution administered through DTI.

In addition, Miriam is the chair of the Delaware Geographic Data Committee (DGDC); and is the State Lead to the National State Geographic Information Council (NSGIC). Miriam, along with DTI and the Lieutenant Governor's office, was awarded the Esri Special Achievement (SAG) in GIS award in 2020 for her work on the Delaware Census Complete Count Hub site and mapping efforts.